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## Review of *North American Exploration: A Continent Defined* Edited by John Logan Allen

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**North American Exploration: A Continent Defined.** Edited by John Logan Allen. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997. xiii+472 pp. Maps, figures, notes, references, index. \$75.00 cloth (ISBN 0-8032-1023-X).

*A Continent Defined* is the second of three volumes on North American discovery edited by geographer John Logan Allen. For this volume, six contributors—three historians and three geographers, all North Americans—were recruited.

The discoverers dealt with were, of course, late-comers who found long-term residents already there. Native Americans commonly supplied guides and sometimes maps, indispensable services. One wonders if a citation of G. Malcolm Lewis, of Sheffield, England, for his work on maps by aboriginals is not deserved.

The reproduction of many early maps by Europeans (and Euro-Americans) permits partial dating of the steps in defining—that is, delimiting—the continent. Several are noteworthy. “Florida and Apalche,” 1597 (12), is a crude but recognizable representation of the southeastern part of the United States. Much later, the Mascaro map of 1782 (53) shows quite accurately the southwestern part of the present-day United States and northwestern Mexico, including a portion of San Francisco Bay and streams ending in the desert

interior. Bellin's "*Carte de L'Amerique Septentrionale*," 1755 (197), shows the West Coast and much of the eastern two-thirds of the United States and northward to include a good deal of Hudson Bay. British explorers in what is now western Canada had also been active, as shown by the detail from Alexander Mackenzie's "Map of America" (163) depicting a 1789 view of the Pacific Coast and the Mackenzie River flowing to the Arctic. A Spanish map dated 1793 (373) showing the Pacific Coast, including the Aleutian Islands, represents discoveries made from the Mexican port of San Blas. Presumably, the maps summarized were well-kept secrets.

The chapter on French exploration, 1700-1800, by W. J. Eccles is especially well organized and readable. Oakah L. Jones's account of Spanish exploration in the northwest of Mexico and to the north suffers from the omission of Carl Sauer's *Road to Cibola*, a surprising lack since Sauer was the geographer most knowledgeable about the northwestern part of New Spain. A small matter is Jones's interpretation of the word *rancheria*, as used for the Great Plains, to mean encampment. In much of Mexico, the term refers to a loosely grouped settlement. A dictionary calls it a settlement of huts. Not a small matter is the scale at which a good many maps are reproduced. The need to use a magnifying glass is discouraging.

*A Continent Defined* is a challenge to scholars and well worth the attention of those curious about how Europeans came to know the New Land. Some will find many of the accounts gripping adventure tales. **Leslie Hewes**, *Professor Emeritus of Geography, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*.